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Martin revamping state Treasurer's Office

Public schools in Arizona, including those in Graham and Greenlee counties, will share in nearly \$69.2 million in state education endowment distributions this school year.

The money, which comes from the sale of state trust lands, translates into about \$1,430 per classroom or full-time teacher for each school's classroom site fund — an increase of 114 percent over last year, Arizona State Treasurer Dean Martin said when he met with Graham Mark Tregaskes, superintendent of the Safford School District, was pleased when he heard the news.

"All of the money that goes into our classroom site fund goes to our teachers," Tregaskes said, adding 100 percent of Safford School District's share of the money will go for teacher salaries and benefits.

State law requires the schools to use the money for class size reduction, teacher pay raises, teacher training, AIMS assistance and dropout prevention programs.

Martin met with County Finance Manager Clel Flake, Treasurer Jean Reynolds, Assessor Jacque Attaway and Recorder Wendy John. He also visited the Eastern Arizona College.

Graham County has \$17 million in a state investment pool managed by the state treasurer's office, and the county's money is only a fraction of the \$12.2 billion in assets managed by that office.

"We do all the (investment) diversification for the state," Martin said.

Only Maricopa County and the cities of Phoenix and Tucson handle their own investments. Martin takes the duties of his office seriously and stresses that investments must be safe.

To ensure safety there is real-time monitoring of the state's portfolio, he said.

Tim White, the state's chief investment officer, accompanied Martin on his visits to several southeast Arizona counties. He said county money placed in the state-approved investments offers daily liquidity — access to the earnings without disturbing the investment.

"We use the liquidity every day," Reynolds said.

"They (state-approved investments) offer a higher yield than a bank."

About 44 percent of the county's money is in the state's investment pool.

Martin said as state treasurer, he sets up the investment policy. His philosophy is "safety before liquidity before yield."

A board of investment must approve the treasurer's list of investments.

"The list is reviewed every six months," White said.

Martin said to further safeguard the taxpayers' money, he has brought in an independent fiduciary firm to review the financial dealings of the state treasurer's office.

He also is in the process of hiring an internal auditor.

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